Restoring National Parklands

The Santa Monica Mountains contain significant Mediterranean ecosystems, with many highly disturbed plant communities. Many park areas have been overrun by non-native plant species, causing native plants and wildlife to diminish. To increase biodiversity and help protect this valuable ecosystem, the National Park Service is working to restore parklands in Zuma Canyon (Malibu), Paramount Ranch (Agoura Hills), and Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa (Newbury Park).

Field Trips

The EcoHelpers program teaches high school students the importance of maintaining healthy habitats and watersheds. During the field trips, students learn how invasive species affect wildlife and waterways. Each student restores native plants to help improve habitat and biodiversity.

The program is **free,** and bus reimbursement is provided for up to 50 students (subject to available funding).

On-Site Program

Arrival

Groups arrive around 10:00am. A staff member greets the students on the bus and provides them with guidelines for a safe and enjoyable visit. The students will then get a short restroom break before the program starts.

Ecology Lesson

Students receive an introduction to the park and dynamic, interactive lesson on the benefits of restoration to wildlife.

Nature Hike

Following the lesson, students are divided into two or three groups and alternate between a planting activity and guided hike. The hike is an excellent opportunity for students to see the park's natural resources and learn basic concepts of ecology. The trail travels through the five major plant communities of the Santa Monica Mountains: Coastal Sage Scrub, Chaparral, Oak Woodland, Riparian (streamside), and Grassland. Students see the biodiversity of these communities firsthand, and learn how plants have adapted to thrive in a Mediterranean ecosystem.

Restoration

Arriving at the restoration site, the students are given gloves and tools and guided in the planting of native plants. Students may pick partners and plant a variety of species from the park's own native plant nursery. Water is provided, but students should bring their own sunscreen, hats, and durable footwear.

Conclusion

After the planting activity, the groups are given a short conclusion before breaking for lunch. The full program lasts about 2 hours.

Lunch

Following the program, your group is encouraged to enjoy their lunch at a shaded picnic. Since food and beverages are not sold at the site, students need to bring their own lunches and drinks. We also recommend that students bring water bottles for the hike and restoration work.

Program Theme and Goals

Theme

Plants are the Center of the Universe: restoring native vegetation improves wildlife habitat and water quality.

Goals

Students will:

- Understand that non-native invasive species damage the natural communities that sustain native wildlife.

- Recognize that restoring natural communities will improve wildlife habitats and food chains.

Field Trip Locations

Zuma Canyon (near Zuma Beach)
5700 Bonsall Drive
Malibu, CA 90265

Paramount Ranch
2903 Cornell Road
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Rancho Sierra Vista / Satwiwa
4122 West Potrero Road
Newbury Park, CA 91320

Why is EcoHelpers a good program for your school?

- ✓ The program is **free.**

- ✓ Bus reimbursement is provided for up to 50 students (subject to available funding).

- ✓ Field trips are offered Tuesday through Friday.

- ✓ Meets California curriculum standards.

- ✓ Can fulfill service learning requirements.

- ✓ Program provides students with the knowledge of how to make a difference within their own communities.

- ✓ Students gain hands-on experience they will never forget.

For application and more info, contact:

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EcoHelpers

A service learning program of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, in cooperation with the California Coastal Conservancy.